AMENDMENTS TO THE SPECIFICATION

Please replace paragraph [0001] on page 1 with the following amended paragraph.

[0001]   This application is based on application No. 2002-271511 filed in Japan, the contents of which is̶ are hereby incorporated by reference.

Please replace paragraph [0007] spanning pages 3 and 4 with the following amended paragraph.

[0007]   The image processing apparatus constituting a first aspect of the present invention is an image processing apparatus that handles image data, comprising: a dividing unit which divides image data into large blocks of a prescribed size and further subdivides these large blocks into multiple smaller blocks; a large block isolated point calculation unit which calculates the number of isolated points contained in each large block established by the dividing unit; a small block isolated point calculation unit which calculate̶ calculates the number of isolated points contained in each small block established by the dividing unit; and a halftone-dot region determination unit which determines whether or not a large block is a halftone-dot region based on the number of isolated points calculated by the large block isolated point calculation unit and the number of the isolated points calculated by the small block isolated point calculation unit.

Please replace paragraph [0008] on page 4 with the following rewritten paragraph.

[0008]   In this image processing apparatus, the large blocks are subdivided by the dividing unit into small blocks. The number of isolated points in each large block is then calculated by the large block isolated point calculation unit, and the number of isolated points in each small block is then calculated by the small block isolated point calculation̶ units unit. It is then determined by the halftone-dot region determination unit whether or not the large block is a halftone-dot region. This determination considers both the number of isolated points in the large block and the number of

isolated points in each small block. In other words, for a large block to be determined a halftone-dot region, not only must the number of isolated points in the large block satisfy the condition for determination as a halftone-dot region, but the number of isolated points in each small block must also satisfy the condition for a halftone-dot region. This allows region attributes to be distinguished in more detail and reduces the risk of an erroneous region attribute determination.

Please replace paragraph [0009] spanning pages 4 and 5 with the following amended paragraph.

[0009]   The image processing apparatus of a second aspect of the present invention is an image processing apparatus that handles image data, comprising: a dividing unit which divides image data into multiple small blocks; a small block isolated point calculation unit which ~~calculate~~ calculates the number of isolated points contained in each small block established by the dividing unit; a large block isolated point calculation unit which calculates the number of isolated points contained in ~~the~~ a large block composed of multiple smaller blocks based on the small block isolated point totals calculated by the small block isolated point calculation ~~units~~ unit; and a halftone-dot region determination unit which determines whether or not a large block is a halftone-dot region based on the number of isolated points calculated by the large block isolated point calculation unit and the number of isolated points calculated by the small block isolated point calculation unit. The effect described above can be obtained in this case as well.

Please replace paragraph [0011] spanning pages 5 and 6 with the following rewritten paragraph.

[0011]   The image processing method of a third aspect of the present invention is an image processing method that handles image data and includes the following steps: (1) dividing image data into large blocks of a prescribed size and further subdividing these large blocks into multiple smaller blocks; (2) calculating the number of isolated points contained in the large block established via division and the number of isolated points contained in the small ~~block~~ blocks established via division; and (3) determining whether or not the large block is a halftone-dot region

based on the calculated number of large block isolated points and the calculated number of small block isolated points.

Please replace paragraph [0012] on page 6 with the following rewritten paragraph.

[0012]   The image processing method of a fourth aspect of the present invention is an image processing method that handles image data and includes the following steps: (1) dividing image data into multiple small blocks; (2) calculating the number of isolated points contained in each small block established via division; (3) calculating the number of isolated points contained in the~~the~~ a large block composed of multiple smaller blocks based on the calculated number of small block isolated points; and (4) determining whether or not the large block is a halftone-dot region based on the calculated number of large block isolated points and the calculated number of small block isolated points.

Please replace paragraph [0013] on page 6 with the following amended paragraph.

[0013]   These and <u>other</u> objects, advantages and features of the invention will become apparent from the following description thereof taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawings which illustrate specific embodiments of the invention.

Please replace paragraph [0041] spanning pages 16 and 17 with the following amended paragraph.

[0041]   In this embodiment, the number of isolated ~~point~~ point(s) for each of the small blocks was sent to the OR circuit 48, but the present invention is not limited to this implementation. In other words, it is not necessary that the small blocks for which the isolated point totals are sent consist of all small blocks or even contiguous small blocks. It is acceptable if areas that are away from each other in a large block are extracted for final halftone-dot determination. For example, it is acceptable if the small blocks ①, ③ and ⑤ are extracted from the image data shown in Fig. 3 and the number of isolated points for <u>only</u> these small blocks ~~only~~ is sent to the OR circuit 48.

Please replace paragraph [0044] spanning pages 17 and 18 with the following amended paragraph.

[0044]   Although the present invention has been fully described by way of examples with reference to the accompanying drawings, it is to be noted that various changes and ~~modification~~ modifications will be apparent to those skilled in the art. Therefore, unless ~~otherwise~~ such changes and modifications otherwise depart from the scope of the present invention, they should be construed as being included therein.